

## **Bush's Major Emitter Meeting at Toyako: A dead end for climate change** July 2008

### **What is the Major Economies Meeting (MEM)?**

The Major Economies Meeting (originally the Major Emitters Meetings<sup>1</sup>) takes place in Toyako, Japan on 9 July on the sidelines of the G8 summit. It is an attempt by the Bush Administration to deflect international criticism from their 'do nothing attitude' on climate change. According to the US State Department, the process is "a new initiative to develop and contribute to a post-Kyoto framework on energy security and climate change by the end of 2008<sup>2</sup>".

It is difficult to understand why leaders such as Merkel, Brown or Sarkozy would want to be pictured with President Bush at a climate change meeting mere months before the end of his term, and after eight years of his systematically standing in the way of decisive global action on climate change. Greenpeace welcomes global leaders making saving the climate a key part of their political agenda, but believes that any Leaders Summit should be hosted by the United Nations, and include those countries most affected by climate change, such as small islands states and the least-developed countries.

### **How does the MEM fit with the UN negotiations on Kyoto's second phase after 2012?**

During the UN negotiations in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, the Bush Administration's obstructive climate agenda was clear for all to see: they watered down the Bali Action Plan, relegated climate science to a footnote in the final declaration, and had to be publicly shamed by the international community before even agreeing to a weak consensus<sup>3</sup>.

As a result the Bush Administration was isolated during the negotiations as the European Union made it clear that further MEM meetings would be useless if negotiations failed in Bali. France and Germany in particular, threatened not to attend the MEM meetings unless the US agreed to an action plan to save the planet. This threat was part of what forced the US to finally accept a launch of new negotiations under the U N Framework Convention on Climate Change. But real steps forward

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<sup>1</sup> By using the phrase 'major emitters' the Bush Administration was trying to suggest that the US and developing countries such as India and China are all 'alike' in terms of their climate impacts. This ignores the historical responsibility of developed nations, especially of the US, for the vast majority of emissions currently in the atmosphere and has rightly been rejected by developing country governments.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.state.gov/g/oes/climate/mem/>. The use of the phrase "post-Kyoto" already reveals the bias of the process, as it implies that Kyoto will not continue. In reality, countries under the Kyoto Protocol are legally obliged to agree emission reduction targets for the years after 2012.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/press/releases/bali>

were only taken under the Kyoto Protocol in Bali. Under Kyoto, governments agreed what the science demands, i.e. that industrialised countries must cut their emissions by at least 25-40 percent by 2020 (compared to 1990 levels). However, the US has still not ratified the Kyoto Protocol<sup>4</sup>.

After the US caved in, France, Germany and other countries have now toned down their (public) criticism of the MEM. Despite these recent attempts to put a positive spin on the MEM, there is little support for this process from other countries that are attending the meeting. The first meeting in Washington DC was dismissed as a “total charade”<sup>5</sup> by a senior EU bureaucrat. More recently, bureaucrats have been positive about some frank discussions taking place behind closed doors. But the MEM process has failed to produce any progress on the issues that matter, such as setting emission targets for 2020<sup>6</sup>.

### **So why does Greenpeace oppose the MEM?**

Bush, supported by Japan in particular, is using the MEM to push for the *substitution* of binding international commitments with voluntary pledges and aspirational targets. Bush’s agenda of voluntarism is incompatible with the action needed on climate change that science requires. It is contrary to the Kyoto Protocol, the one global agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. As such the Bush proposals stand in the way of the global climate agreement the world needs: an agreement based on real commitments. The MEM runs the risk of undermining the negotiations taking place at the UN. Greenpeace calls on governments to focus all their negotiating resources on the UN global climate negotiations and to agree to strengthened commitments for post 2012 by December 2009.

There have been three official MEM meetings: the first took place in Washington DC in September 2007, the second in Honolulu, Hawaii in January 2008<sup>7</sup> and the third in Paris in April 2008. There was also an informal MEM get together on the sidelines of the so-called Gleneagles Dialogue in March 2008 in Chiba, Japan and a drafting meeting for the MEM Leaders summit statement on 21 and 22 June in Seoul, South Korea<sup>8</sup>.

The countries attending the meeting are: Japan, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, China, Canada, India, Brazil, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Australia, Indonesia and South Africa. Representatives of the UN, the EU Presidency and the EU Commission will also be present. The countries most at risk from impacts of climate change, such as the small island states (AOSIS), are not even invited to be at the table in Toyako. This is morally unacceptable.

### **But can’t the MEM help cut emissions all over the world?**

The countries meeting in Toyako account for over 90 percent of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide. More than 80 percent of emissions in the atmosphere today come from the G8 countries alone. Real action by those gathered in Japan could deliver massive cuts in emissions. But, this would require **binding** mandatory targets

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<sup>4</sup> On the outcomes of Bali compare:

<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/international/press/reports/the-bali-decisions.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2007/sep/29/usnews.climatechange7>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSSEO150519>

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.greenpeace.org/international/news/bush-monumental-failure>

<sup>8</sup> See <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSSEO150519>

for industrialised countries, which the US rejects and Japan has questioned on a number of occasions in recent months.

The US business community supports binding emission caps. More than two dozen of the largest American companies such as Ford, General Electric, General Motors, Dupont, Duke Energy and Chrysler are calling for domestic cap and trade legislation to start cutting American emissions immediately and to reach cuts between 60 and 80 percent by 2050. Greenpeace believes that even more drastic cuts are necessary, but the direction and the approach proposed are correct.

The EU, China and other countries attending the MEM were unequivocal in their support for the Kyoto Protocol at the Bali climate negotiations. They must stand up for Kyoto in Toyako and make it clear that they will not be diverted from the task of strengthening the global agreement. Despite US and Japanese obstructions, decisive new negotiations on a strengthened global climate regime for the period after 2012 were started in earnest in Bangkok in early April 2008. These negotiations must now receive the full support of the global community. Key issues, such as agreeing to cut global emissions by **at least** 50 percent by 2050 compared to 1990 levels, as the science demands, need to be taken forward and agreed under the United Nations — rather than being undermined at a Bush climate sideshow.

### **Why is Bush publicly pushing the issue of climate change at the end of his Presidency?**

After seven years of obstruction, the Administration is trying to appear active on climate change until Bush leaves office, but this is nothing more than absurd theatre. The Bush Administration realises that it has lost the trust of the American public and the international community. They also see the MEM as their last chance to lock in a weak agreement before a new administration with a stronger position on global warming comes into office. Senators McCain and Obama both support binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions through a cap and trade system. The rest of the world must not allow the Bush Administration to tie the international community to weak targets or only voluntary action. The global community must remember that Bush is a 'lame duck' and will be out of office when the next phase of Kyoto will be agreed in Copenhagen in 2009.

### **Does Greenpeace support a sectoral approach to reducing emissions?**

So-called 'sectoral approaches' will be pushed very strongly by the Japanese government at the MEM. In recent months, Japan has sometimes suggested, that action in specific sectors, such as the cement industry, are an alternative to binding national emission reduction commitments. This is unacceptable. Sectoral approaches are the death of effective climate protection, if they amount to an invitation to industry only to state what they want to do voluntarily. Japan has on numerous occasions said that through adding up all voluntary commitments by industries it wants to agree to a new 'bottom up' national 'plan'.

However, what needs to be done has to be agreed on the basis of climate science and the resulting urgent imperative for real reductions in the developed world. The British Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks said as much in Chiba on 14 March 2008: "You can't mess around with this. There need to be clear international targets and they need to be translated into targets for nation states."<sup>9</sup> At recent UN climate

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<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUST275301>

negotiations in June 2008, Japan finally seemed to accept this view. The final MEM statement will be a test as to whether Japan wants to use 'sectoral approaches' as an escape door from binding emission reductions – or not. For developing countries taking action on specific sectors - such as expanding the use of renewable energies in China - might constitute *one* possible approach to decarbonise their development path. Such mitigation actions in specific sectors must be supported by the transfer of technology and financial resources from industrialised countries – as was promised in Bali.

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